



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

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PRITZKER ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES A RECORD 41,000 BUSINESSES SERVED BY STATEWIDE NETWORK OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS IN 2020

State investments expanded services to double the number of small businesses served while helping yield over \$150 million in financial assistance for those facing challenges brought by COVID-19

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today announced that 2020 was a record year for business support provided through the Illinois Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) – with over 41,000 business owners receiving support through the program. Thanks to investments by the Pritzker administration to help more small businesses receive technical assistance and other support needed to navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the SBDCs expanded to impact more small businesses than ever before served through the program.

“Without question, small businesses here in Illinois and across the country are facing unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19 – which is why the State of Illinois has stepped in to meet businesses where they are with resources and relief needed to help owners and entrepreneurs navigate the crisis and get back on their feet,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Our investments to expand the successful Illinois SBDC program have paid off, with a record number of small businesses receiving the support, including an expansion of services in our most vulnerable communities, and over \$150 million in relief realized due to the help they received. With the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on our economy, the SBDCs will continue to play a pivotal role in helping small businesses navigate their future and tap into additional funds afforded by the passage of the federal American Rescue Plan.”

Overall, investments to expand the program last year resulted in more than \$150 million in financing provided to small businesses as a result of SBDC counseling received. The SBDCs will assist small businesses with tapping into funding made available to small businesses through the federal American Rescue Plan.

“Our Illinois SBDCs have and will continue to play a pivotal role in helping to marshal the resources businesses need to make ends meet during the COVID-19 crisis, so they can emerge stronger on the other side,” **said Acting DCEO Director Sylvia Garcia**. “Thanks to continued investments made Governor Pritzker, we have expanded a successful model to reach more of the small businesses we know have been hardest hit during this crisis. SBDCs like the recently opened center at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA) leverage resources provided by the State and our partners at the SBA to meet businesses where they are – assisting in our efforts to ensure an equitable economic response to COVID-19 and helping businesses across our state meet their challenges head-on, no matter where they are located.”

The state recognizes 2020 as a record-breaking year for the small business development centers – supporting more clients than ever before and contributing to 170,000 new business starts in Illinois last year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Illinois SBDC Network is directly responsible for the following impacts last year:

- More than 41,000 small businesses served overall – more than double the number served in 2019
- More than 6,700 minority owned businesses receiving services – 28 percent increase over last year
- More than 8,000 women owned businesses receiving services – 8 percent increase over last year
- Over 12,400 businesses located in downstate communities – 40 percent increase over last year

“Small businesses are the economic engine of this country and the U.S. Small Business Administration has worked expeditiously to ensure equitable access to programs like the Paycheck Protection Program, the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, and an array of grants,” **said Bo Steiner, District Director of the SBA Illinois District Office.** “The Small Business Development Center network is a vital and essential partner in implementing our mission and ensuring all entrepreneurs are served and supported. Leveraging this network, in addition to the community navigator program and other inclusive outreach strategies, resulted in more minority, rural and women-owned businesses receiving support through SBA programs than ever before.”

DCEO joined small businesses and members of the community to celebrate National SBDC Day at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association center in Chicago’s Uptown community. The Chinese Mutual Aid Association is one of seven new centers opened by the State of Illinois in 2020. The expansion of the SBDC network was made possible by a roughly \$19 million investment directed by the Pritzker administration to expand services and assist more small and minority businesses from around the state with accessing COVID-19 emergency assistance available through the state and its federal partners.

“The CMAA has been supporting the immigrant and refugee community for 40 years and we are truly grateful for Governor Pritzker’s strategic expansion of the Illinois SBDC network, which is allowing us to significantly increase the scope of our services,” **said Dennis Mondero, Chinese Mutual Aid Association Executive Director.** “Our new Illinois SBDC at CMAA is hard at work helping meet the needs of our small business community on Argyle, in Uptown and across the city, especially those owned by Asian Americans. We thank DCEO for these critical investments that are serving the community in their current time of need and well into the future.”

“I was having trouble navigating the SBA COVID-19 relief programs and needed help,” **said Johnnie Torres, of family-owned Platinum Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning.** “Thanks to Governor Pritzker’s expansion of new SBDC locations, I was able to get the support I needed from the new Illinois SBDC at CMAA. My advisor walked me through the entire process, and I secured a First Draw PPP Loan, which was an absolute lifeline for my business. I am so grateful for the Illinois SBDC at CMAA as it gives me comfort to know that I am not alone in my journey in pursuing my dreams of being a successful small business.”

New investments in the SBDCs last year have made way for additional business resources for education, training and professional business advising to small businesses that have experienced supply chain disruptions, staffing challenges, a decrease in gross receipts or customers, or a closure due to COVID-19. Overall, more than 54,000 hours of counseling were provided to support small businesses in need of help to obtain both state and federal resources.

“As the first Asian American elected to the General Assembly and a member of Illinois’ Asian American Caucus, I have been advocating for Asian American small business community long before this

pandemic,” **said Rep. Theresa Mah (D-Chicago)**. “With Governor Pritzker’s well-timed expansion of our SBDC network, we are leveling the playing field for minority-owned businesses by ensuring these resources are accessible in diverse communities around the state. Congratulations to all of our 42 Illinois SBDCs on a banner year - and thank you for your continued efforts to assist small businesses with navigating the ongoing crisis.”

In the wake of the pandemic, the state of Illinois has made record investments to expand support for struggling small businesses and communities, with over \$1 billion in relief launched since last spring. The SBDC’s are often the first line of support when businesses seek technical assistance, providing support for business owners seeking assistance from the including the state’s Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program, which is now closed; as well as through [state-directed outreach programs](#) to help more Illinois small businesses qualify for relief through the latest round of PPP.

“Expanding the footprint of SBDCs under Governor JB Pritzker’s leadership has provided essential support to businesses during the pandemic,” **said Majority Leader, Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chicago)**. “The CMAA-SBDC has been an invaluable resource to the business community and my district.”

To date, DCEO has engaged more than 10,000 businesses one-on-one through the latest round of PPP, contributing to Illinois’ top five spot in the nation for PPP loans and grant dollars – with over \$9 billion and 162,000 loans awarded to Illinois firms so far this round.

“After working with the Illinois SBDC at Chinese Mutual Aid Association, I’ve made my dream of owning my own business into a reality,” **said Joseph Ho, owner of BHOP ESPORTS in Vernon Hills, an early Chinese Mutual Aid SBDC client**. “BHOP ESPORTS is an Esports Video-game Center that aims to help those who are pursuing their academic and professional goals through the trending platform of Esports. When COVID-19 first hit, I was concerned that opening a business would be a challenge too big to take on – but the team at the Illinois SBDC at CMAA helped me navigate my business planning, marketing, financing, zoning and other essential steps needed for a start-up to get ready for my May 1st Grand Opening at Hawthorn Mall.”

Since 1984, the Illinois SBDC Network has provided small business owners with access to business advising, training, and other free services designed to help them start, launch, and grow their businesses. The Illinois SBDC’s provide management and technical assistance to small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs, no-cost training, support on accessing capital and regulatory compliance help with trade and serve in a dozen or more languages.

With 42 locations statewide, Illinois currently boasts one of the largest SBDC networks in the nation. For more information or to find your local SBDC, please visit [DCEO’s website](#). For updates on other small business supports available, call the First Stop hotline at 1.800.252.2923, or follow us @IllinoisDCEO for updates on programs.

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